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3 March 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR: SA/DDI - Mr. Komer

FROM : FE, ONE - H. P. Ford

SUBJECT : Comment on (State) Memo for NSC Planning Board, "Ten Principal Conclusions and Lessons Deriving from the Taiwan Crises [sic]," of 2 March 1959.

1. State's memo seems to be a plea, in the name of "State-Defense cooperation," that Defense incline to State's views that (a) the offshore islands should be defended, and (b) the US must have a greater "cushion" of conventional weapons on hand for future crises.

2. Para.1 should be scrapped and re-done.

a. The para. does not square with the USIB's (SNIE's 100-9-58, 100-12-58, and 100-4-59) more restrained estimates of ChiCom intentions in launching the crisis. The USIB has not made the judgments that the Chinese Communists expected that a US failure to support the GRC in defending the offshore islands would necessarily result in (a) their "capture," (b) "the elimination of one-third of the GRC's fighting effectives," or (c) the "collapse of morale on Taiwan and a Communist takeover of that big island from within."

b. Must Mr. Kissinger's name be invoked, especially when Berlin and other cases could be cited to question his "ever" thesis?

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c. A suggested alternative para: "As Kissinger has pointed out,7 The Communists are ever often likely to pose risks in such a manner that they will always often seem disproportionate to the objectives in dispute. Thus the attack . . . US failure to support the GRC in defending these islands would might not only result in their capture loss and possibly even in the elimination of one-third of the GRC's fighting effectives, but also -- and much more importantly -- in the collapse deterioration of morale on Taiwan and the furthering of the probable objective of a Communist take-over of that big island from within. The ChiComs know they cannot capture it otherwise."

3. Para. 5, the heart and guts of the memo, is open to several questions.

a. No one would question the statements in the paragraph that the Chinese Communists want the whole thing -- offshore islands and Taiwan -- and that no part of the whole package will satisfy them.

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b. That is a far different thing, however, from saying that "the issue is not the Offshore Islands but Taiwan." Unfortunately, the issue is the offshore islands, both for the US and Communist China, just as it is also Taiwan. Furthermore, the para. as written is misleading, and possibly lulling to a policy reader, in that it accepts at face value the ChiCom line that Peiping is relatively indifferent concerning the offshore islands. To the contrary, the ChiComs would probable be pleased to get the offshore islands and the attendant political gains, and to that end might even take a crack at one or more of the offshore islands in the future. The reader should be so reminded.

c. To this observer, the issue in the offshore islands is how to end an exposed and friendless maldeployment without unacceptable consequences either on Taiwan or in world opinion. O/NE has long held (since 1955) that the GRC would accept evacuation, in the full spirit of State's discovery in its para. 6 that the GRC is "amenable to realism and reason." It will be recalled that SNIE 100-12-58 (October) stated that Southeast Asia would not fold up were the Communists to gain the offshore islands.

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4. Para. 7 deals rather loosely with Asian opinion.

a. Did "each" FE government seem fearful that the US might not support FE countries in time of need?

b. Did "most" responsible Asian leaders confide their understanding and support of US actions?

c. Was Asian public opinion (except in the ROK et al.) generally critical only at the "outset"?

d. We should proudly take note of the fact that the US did get unexpected support from Asian leaders. We should not overestimate this, however, nor should we confuse their support of our firmness necessarily with support for continued Nationalist control of the offshore islands.

5. The judgments made in the memo's other paragraphs look O.K.

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